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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8826
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0390

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 004278

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STATE FOR EUR/WE, WHA/AND AND PM/RSAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#) [PARM](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE/VENEZUELA: NO DECISIONS YET ON ARMS SALE,
ANTI-NGO BILL, UNSC CANDIDACY

REF: A. STATE 95791

[1](#)B. STATE 97547

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS
ONS 1.4 B/D

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: On June 20, we raised ref A (possible French company arms deal with Spain for Venezuela) and ref B (Venezuelan anti-NGO bill) demarches with the MFA's PDAS and DAS-equivalents for Latin America. Regarding reports that the Spanish company Navantia has asked Thales France for patrol boat communications systems, we were told that the MFA has not heard of this, but will inquire and get back to us. On the Venezuelan anti-NGO bill, we were told that France and the EU are following this issue closely and will decide in the coming weeks whether and/or how to register concerns with the Venezuelan government. The MFA officials also said France would not decide on the competition between Venezuela and Guatemala for a UN Security Council seat before September, implying that France would be reluctant in any case to lobby others for Guatemala. They believed that Venezuela would pay almost any price to join the UNSC. End summary.

THALES COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Deputy PolCouns and poloff raised ref A demarche June 20 with Jean-Marc Laforet, PDAS-equivalent for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Michel Pinard, DAS-equivalent for South America. Neither Laforet or Pinard were aware of a pending request by Navantia for Thales to provide integrated communications systems for patrol boats; at the same time, Laforet was clear that the GOF did not have any objections to such a sale in principle, although he said the GOF in practice would weigh a number of factors - foreign policy, regional stability, the views of France's allies - before making a decision. Laforet said the MFA would investigate and respond as soon as possible. He nonetheless discounted Deputy PolCouns' assertion that countries in the region such as Peru were becoming increasingly concerned by Venezuela's attempts to expand its influence. Pinard added that, in his opinion, providing patrol boats and related materials to the Venezuelan government was not inherently problematic (compared to Colombia's large military). Neither would it be regionally destabilizing, since Venezuela did not have "territorial aspirations." If the Venezuelan government cannot procure patrol boats, they will be unable to control their coastline and deter drug smuggling, said Pinard. In addition, Venezuela will turn to countries such as China and Russia - a possibility that neither France nor the U.S. would want, said Pinard, given the certainty that any French sale would not feature latest technologies, and would contain

end-use assurances. (Presidency Advisor Dominique Boche made the same point -- his only comment -- when PolMinCouns raised our concerns with him June 13.)

13. (S/NF) Econoff also delivered ref A point on June 16 to MFA Economic Affairs Directorate, Acting Deputy Director for Export Controls Emmanuel Pineda and his action officer for Latin America, Lionel Fabre. Pineda reiterated points which he said Abensour made last February during his consultations in Washington (and rehashed by Pinard as well), namely that Venezuela is a democratic state and is not currently subject to any international arms embargo. France has a long history of supplying the Venezuelan military and police, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, and France continues to supply maintenance services and spare parts related to these previous arms sales. Nevertheless, for any new equipment sales or modernization programs, the GOF is careful to take into account regional interests. Pineda added, however, that refusing to sell equipment to Venezuela would only push them into the arms of nontraditional suppliers, such as Russia and China. That being said, Pineda and Fabre said that they could not recall any recent export license requests from Thales for communications equipment to Venezuela. They were willing to further investigate if we could provide details on the "integrated communications system" desired by Spanish company Navantia, but they did not respond to our request that France discourage Spain from proceeding with the sale of boats to Venezuela.

VENEZUELAN ANTI-NGO LAW

14. (C) Laforet and Pinard said the MFA was closely following the National Assembly's debate on the NGO law. France and

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other EU members were cognizant of the issue and would decide over the coming weeks whether and/or how to weigh in. Pinard and Laforet cautioned against being too critical of countries such as Venezuela and Bolivia, bearing in mind that their governments were legitimately representative of the previously disenfranchised. He also insisted that Colombia was more of a problem in this regard than Venezuela. Pinard said he was scheduled to visit Venezuela at the end of June, and would be discussing this issue with French diplomats and others. Deputy PolCouns encouraged Pinard to contact the U.S. Embassy for further consultations, recalling previous, similar consultations in Paris. Pinard said he would be interested in doing so.

VENEZUELA AND THE UNSC

15. (C) Deputy PolCouns inquired about current French thinking regarding Venezuela's push for a UNSC seat. Laforet said France preferred that the regional group come to a consensus.

If a consensus candidate was not forthcoming, a GOF decision on which country to support - Venezuela or Guatemala - would not be necessary until September, said Laforet. Pinard added that Chavez would do anything for a Venezuela seat at the UNSC, and it was entirely possible that Venezuela could go so far as to modify its support for Iran in order to be elected to the UNSC. (Comment: Laforet and Pinard were much more cautious than past GOF interlocutors regarding Venezuela's UNSC candidacy. Whereas others have told us the GOF favors Guatemala, Laforet and Pinard opened the door to France supporting Venezuela if it was the consensus candidate from South America. They also strongly implied, citing likely Chinese resistance to Guatemala, and likely Brazilian and Argentinean support for Venezuela, that France would not lobby for Guatemala in any case. End comment.) Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

